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Elandsfontein Mining refutes allegations of non-consultation for water licence

Elandsfontein Mining and Exploration is refuting allegations that it has not consulted the public with regard to the water use licence for its phosphate mine.

The Centre for Environmental Rights made this allegation of non-compliance by Elandsfontein Exploration and Mining in a statement to the media last week.

However, Elandsfontein Exploration and Mining said it has engaged in an extensive public participation process, as part of its environmental impact assessment (EIA), mining rights application under the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) and then again for the application for its integrated water use licence and air emissions licence.

"This process started in 2014 and the extent and frequency of engagement has been detailed in the various submissions made to date," the company said.

"Throughout this process, we continued to engage with various stakeholders and had numerous follow up engagements with smaller target groups; consulted with adjacent land owners and farmers associations; participated in extensive engagements with SANParks; and consulted water users within a 5 km radius, which exceeds our zone of influence.

"In addition, we arranged meetings between interested and affected parties in neighbouring communities and independent experts, allowing the public to engage directly with water specialists," said Elandsfontein Exploration and Mining.

The phosphate mining company added that it recognises that engaging with its stakeholders is key to its success. The company will continue to engage on issues in a manner that is transparent and constructive, it said. "We invite and encourage all interested parties to engage directly with us," concluded Elandsfontein Exploration and Mining.

The Centre for Environmental Rights (CER) alleged last week that despite not yet having a water use licence, and with its environmental management programme still under appeal, Elandsfontein Exploration and Mining has already largely completed construction of an opencast phosphate mine on the edge of the West Coast National Park.

The Centre said that Elandsfontein Exploration and Mining has not consulted with any of the interested and affected parties on its proposed water use, or the risks this water use may pose to the Elandsfontein aquifer which recharges the Langebaan Lagoon.

The Centre for Environmental Rights further urged the Department of Water and Sanitation to order Elandsfontein Mining and Exploration to undertake public consultation.